

St. George's Church. Many such reflections, no doubt, swept through the minds of the vast congregation which listened yesterday morning to the tones—which cannot be secularized—of the old bell, pealing forth its sweet invitation, to come to the new St. George's. In the words of the Rev. Dr. Bond, slightly changed to suit a change of circumstances: "Who can be surprised, as the day has come when we shall no longer see the old familiar place, as our house of God, that many hearts are moved with strong and saddened feelings, as we prepare to seek another spot wherein to worship, even though it be more suitable and more beautiful?"

The Bishop preached in the morning, the Rev. Canon Bond, LL.D., in the afternoon, and the Rev. James Carmichael, A.M., in the evening.

#### MORNING SERVICE.

##### THE BISHOP'S SERMON.

ISAIAH, 56. 7.—"Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people."

There is something very delightful in taking part in the opening service in a new church. Many of you were present when the foundation of this building was laid. You have seen it rise up stone by stone from the very ground. You have watched every arch as it was formed, and every window as it took its allotted place. Most of you too have thrown in from time to time your contributions towards its erection—and you have felt, I dare say, some little anxiety as to the result of the builder's skill.

And now, when you gaze upon it in its fair proportions, you feel, if I mistake not, an honest pride that you have been the means of raising a building so comely and so beautiful, and that here, if God spares you, you may in years to come meet for His worship. And I too, when I entered this church for the first time a few days ago, felt proud and thankful that such a noble building was added to the number of those which already strengthen and adorn my Diocese;—thankful, too, that there are those among us who have been willing to give of their substance for so blessed an object.

But although such feelings are very natural, and even right, in God's sight, there are other feelings—higher and holier—which ought to possess our minds to-day; feelings which our text suggests, and which I shall endeavour to call forth. May God Himself bless my words to that end. I want to show you—

1st, The real character of this building.

2ndly, The blessing here promised to every true worshipper in it.

3rdly, God's willingness to accept your offerings.

As to the character of this building—it is no common house: it is the house of God. In the verses before my text, the Lord speaks of the blessedness of those who keep His Sabbaths from polluting them—who have joined themselves to Him and to His people—to whom He gives a place and a name better than of sons and daughters. "Even them (He says) will I bring to my holy mountain (that is to my temple on Mount Zion) and make them joyful in my house of prayer." Here then we see in what light God regarded the temple of old. He looked upon it as His house. He speaks of it as "mine house and my walls." And from this day forth the building in which we are now gathered may be looked upon in the same light. The voice of prayer has just been heard in it. The Saviour's holy feast was celebrated in it this morning. His word has been read; and it is my privilege now stand up and preach the first sermon in it.

We have prayed that God, who by His presence did consecrate the Temple of old, would be present among his worshippers here, and that He would accept our offering of this place for His services.—Henceforth, then, we may regard it as set apart and dedicated to him. And I hope that before long every debt upon the building will be paid off, so that we may have the happiness of assembling here, and by a special and solemn act consecrate it forever to the Lord. As often then as you come into these courts, remember the words—"My house." Enter it with a feeling of holy reverence—the Lord is here, in His holy temple. Take off thy shoes from off thy feet. There is one among you whom ye know not. I have often thought that our reverence for God's house is not sufficiently marked. We do not sufficiently realize our

Lord's presence among us. We are not watchful enough over our feelings, our thoughts, and our words. Before the service begins, and also when it is over, do not forget, dear brethren, that you are still within His sacred courts. It is well when the service is ended not to rise too hastily from your pews, or be too eager, ere the sound of prayers has died away, to plunge as it were into the world again. It would be well if we put a close seal on our lips when here, never open them to speak on worldly subjects; and if we deferred, until after we passed the threshold of His house, those friendly greetings, which are so delightful among brethren but which are out of place here. But there is yet another word in our text, which defines still more clearly the sacred character of His house. It is spoken of as a house of prayer. "My house shall be called a house of prayer." This is the great purpose for which we meet here—for prayer. Each one of us draws near to God in his own chamber. We there tell him of our own individual wants—those wants which press upon each one of us, and are perhaps known only to ourselves. We speak to God apart, telling Him of the special burdens that oppress us, and of the special sins that beset us—and we ask him each one for himself, to put away those sins, and either to remove those burdens, or to help us to bear them. All this is between ourselves and God. We are alone with Him. Our hearts speak to him in private. Again we daily gather our beloved ones around us and, as members of the same household, we plead for family mercies and family blessings. We raise an altar in our homes and kneel there with our servants and little ones, asking God to bless us as a Christian family. But here it is different. We meet as a mixed multitude, but still as fellow members of a Christian body—as members of a great spiritual family—to pour out our common griefs, to make our common confessions, to thank God for our common blessings. We meet together as a church, or rather as a branch of that one great church to which we have the happiness to belong. We join in united prayer. "being many" come together as "one" in Christ, and every one members one of another." And so with one heart and one mouth we approach the throne of God. Surely then holiness becomes this House, and much devoutness becomes those who worship in it. Prayer will not only, I trust, be uttered by your lips, but will come forth from the deep well of your hearts. And instead of the almost silence of the congregation, I hope that you will make these walls to ring with your hearty and earnest responses. And instead of sitting with cold attention whilst your ministers pray, I trust that each one on his bended knees will make those prayers his own.

A few weeks since I had the happiness of visiting one of our missions in a rough and distant part of the Diocese. We met for service in a rude, half-finished, log church, in the midst of the uncleared forest, and with no dwelling apparently near it. The church yard served as my robing room. And when I entered, I found the wooden walls as yet unplastered, with here and there a wide interval between the planks; so that we worshipped almost in the open air. The building, however, was well filled with worshippers. And here I administered the rite of confirmation, and preached to an attentive people. But there was one thing which lastingly impressed that service upon my mind. I witnessed there in that little church, in that rough building, what I never saw before, a whole congregation on their knees. There was but one exception, that of a woman with a child in her arms. All the rest, men, women and children, knelt during the prayers, as in God's presence. And I am thankful to say that the same blessed scene presented itself in a neighbouring church afterwards. I had seen before congregations in which most of the worshippers were on their knees, but never till that day had I beheld an entire congregation all bowed down in prayer before God. Brethren, let us follow the example of these our brethren. Let every one who worships here draw near to his heavenly Father in the posture which befits a humble suppliant, and for which the pews in this church are so specially adapted. Oh that this church may be pre-eminent, not merely for the beauty of its architecture and excellency of its internal arrangements, but for the devoutness of its congregations, and the earnestness of its

worshippers! Oh that this place may be felt and seen to be a house of prayer! But it may be asked, should the voice of prayer and praise be the only voice that should sound here? Certainly not. Prayer should be the special end for which we come, but not the sole end. We come here also to be taught, to be fed, to have our souls quickened. And for this God has appointed the great ordinance of preaching. It pleases Him (we are told) by the foolishness of preaching to save. The preaching of the Gospel is the power of God. He seems to say, "I have a message for you; come and listen to it." "Hear and your soul shall live." "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." Hooker described sermons as "keys to the Kingdom of Heaven—as wings to the soul—as spurs to the good affections of men—as food to the sound and healthy—as medicine to the diseased." It is clear that preaching was meant to occupy a considerable place in the Christian system. The gospel opens with preaching of the Baptist. Our Lord began his ministry with a sermon, and charged His disciples to preach wherever they went. Was it not after St. Peter's memorable sermon on the day of Pentecost, that there were added to the church 3,000 souls? The souls of men are alienated from God; and this is the special instrument He employs for bringing them back to himself. It is the engine which He is pleased to use in order to move men—the great spiritual lever which He brings to bear on the dead heavy mass of which man's fallen nature is composed. He says to His ministers, "preach the Word." He puts the silver trumpet in their hands, and woe be unto them if they use it not prayerfully, truthfully, earnestly. Look upon sermons brethren, as conveying God's message to you. And if you listen to them in a humble, teachable and earnest spirit, you will be sure to receive something from them that will help you on your heavenward way. Look upon the preacher as God's mouth-piece. And remember the Saviour's words to the first Heralds of His Gospel, so full of solemn import, and yet encouragement, to His Ministers now. "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you." Above all let prayer be offered up for those that minister among you, as speaking to you for Him—as His messenger to your soul. And if you would have their ministrations best to you, ask God so to handle His word that it may be quick and powerful to the saving of your souls. I feel sure that I am touching a responsive chord in your heart, when I remind you, that although you will henceforth worship in a new church, the voice to which you will listen will not be the voice of strangers. Your ears will still be gladdened by the well known accents of one who has been endeared to you by above twenty years of untiring care for your souls, by his faithfulness, by his tenderness over you, and also of his fellow-labourer, who has deservedly won the esteem of you all. They will still speak to you of a living, loving Saviour, and it may be, with increased earnestness they will endeavour to win over your souls to Him. I have spoken of prayer and preaching. But there are other means of grace, which it will be your privilege to enjoy here, other means which God has appointed for your souls' advancement, and that especially which has a sanctity above all the rest, that highest and holiest of Christian ordinances, the blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

But it is time that I pass on to the second point, which the text suggests, namely the blessing promised to every true worshipper; "I will make them joyful in my house of prayer." "With joy (says the Prophet in another place) shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation." The Christian worshipper need not come to the house of God, hanging down his head like a criminal with the sentence of death upon him—like a slave dreading the presence of an angry master. No, he should come here with the confidence of a child, feeling an humble assurance that he and his services will be accepted. He here meets his Saviour, and loves to hear His voice. There is a holy calmness which our service breathes, when heartily engaged in. We are not sent empty away: but are filled and satisfied. Even in our darkest seasons we look unto Him, and are lightened. It is true that sometimes the arrow makes us smart and bleed inwardly, when it strikes home to the conscience. It is true that sometimes we feel in the house of God, as one of old felt, ready to

smite upon our breasts and say, God be merciful to me a sinner. But then, sorrow like this is but a stage in the believer's experience, leading on to joy—it is but the discipline preparing us for joy and peace—enduring but for a night, and ushering in a morning of unclouded joy. Oh! that this may be a place for wounding, and for binding up—for humbling the sinner, and leading him to the Saviour. May many taste here of those healing remedies which flow from the cross of Christ. May your souls receive such comforts, such encouragement, such help in this place, that you may go on your way rejoicing, and be made holy and happy Christians. And if at any time your spirit is bowed down with some unusual sorrow, and all seems cold and comfortless around you, when other helpers fail, and God, even thy God, seems as it were far from thee—then call to mind the promise of our text, "I will make them joyful in my House of Prayer." Come here and plead that promise, and you will find that God can, and will, abundantly fulfil it.

Lastly, be assured of His willingness to accept your service. He declares concerning His people in the words before us, "Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar." The pious Jew brought his appointed offerings to the temple. He laid them upon the altar in humble faith, and went away assured that God had accepted him. How much more blessed the privilege of the Christian worshipper! He offers his sacrifice of prayer and praise to a reconciled Father. He lays it on that one altar which is sprinkled with the blood of Jesus. He comes with holy boldness in the name of the great Intercessor. We know that our offerings—our best offerings—are but poor and miserable—unworthy of God's acceptance—but He graciously receives them. We give Him our prayers; but oh how feeble are they! Our praises; but how cold, lifeless! We give Him our hearts; but we surrender them far too grudgingly. We add our alms, it may be; but we feel that we are only paying back to Him His own. And yet (how great your mercy!) God accepts us, and our offerings as a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour, for Christ's sake.

And now, brethren, I must be closing my address to you. If I have said one word that has reached your hearts—if I have led you to regard this house of prayer with even one deeper feeling of reverence and thankfulness, I need not urge and press you to leave behind this morning some substantial offering towards the great work which has been accomplished here. Many of you have given according to your power, yea, and beyond your power. I would merely remind the congregation generally that a very large sum yet remains to complete the outlay. And surely it is good, very good for us all, to take part in a work like this—remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

I commend you, beloved, as a congregation, and as individuals, to God. I commend your ministers, your church, your school, every institution connected with this place to Him who alone can prosper you. May God ever bless and own the work which shall be undertaken here for His glory and the workers whom He shall make willing to be employed for Him. May you ever feel, when visiting this church, "I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord!" And on leaving it, may you often have cause to exclaim, "I sat under His banner with great delight, and His fruit was sweet unto my taste!" May this be unto you a spiritual banqueting house, and may God's banner over you be love!

#### AFTERNOON SERVICE.

##### THE REV. DR. BOND'S SERMON.

The Rev. Dr. Bond's text was Haggai, ii. 9.—"The glory of this latter House shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of Hosts, and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of Hosts."

The preacher briefly brought in contrast the former House, Solomon's Temple, with the latter House, proving in various ways the superior magnificence of the former, and then drawing attention to that which caused the latter Temple to exceed in glory—"The coming of the Desire of all nations." This was the point of illustration in opening the new church. The former church had its glory, this being the place where Christ had been preached, souls brought to Him, and the present congregation nursed and trained. But it was hoped and prayed and trusted that the new church would exceed it in glory, on the ground that from its